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HEALTH & BEAUTY PAGE D7

San Francisco Chronicle

DATEBOOK

Marina Oswald's View of JFK Shooting

"I dread November," Marina Oswald says in tonight's NBC movie about the wife of John F. Kennedy's assassin. "Every year, it all comes back."

No kidding. And it's usually NBC and the other networks that keep bringing it back.

The JFK virus is especially contagious in any November assassination anniversary divisible by a zero or five.

We're up to 30 now, and TV's enthusiasm for the Kennedy mystique hasn't waned. The current flurry began with a Disney Channel special last week, continued through some gratuitous "20/20" speculation on Friday and reaches full blizzard status this week.

List of JFK-Related TV Shows

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Previous years have brought us everything we always wanted to know (but knew we didn't have to ask) about Jack Kennedy, Jackie Kennedy, Joe Kennedy, Joe Kennedy Jr., Rose Kennedy, Ted Kennedy, Robert Kennedy and that sorry adjunct to the Kennedy saga, Lee Harvey Oswald.

JOHN CARMAN
Television

What She Knew

Now we can add Marina Oswald. "Fatal Deception: Mrs. Lee Harvey Oswald," at 9 tonight on Channel 4, is the assassination viewed through her frightened prism.

Wonder why it's taken so long? Well, the relevant questions are always: What did she know and when did she know it? And the answers, apparently, are nothing and never.

Produced by the estimable David Wolper, filmed partly in Dallas and Moscow, and starring the exquisite Helena Bonham Carter ("A Room With a View," "Howards End"), the movie is a major whoop-de-do for such skinny factual pickings.

It starts with an uncomprehending Marina (Carter) being badgered by federal agents after Kennedy's assassination and through the Warren Commission hearings, jumps to 1978 and fresh stirrings of doubt in her mind, then leaps backward to her marriage with Oswald.

Oswald (played by Frank Whaley) is pleasant enough at first pink blush in Moscow, where he met Marina Nikolayevna Prusakova in 1961. Other qualities surface after their marriage. He was a violent-tempered brute who beat her. And he was a man who surrounded himself in fuzzy mystery.

Suspicious Activities

In Moscow, Marina finds suspicious drawings he's made of the radio station where he works. She wonders if he's a spy. After they move to Texas, he's immersed in fringe politics beyond her understanding. And he has a rifle. One night he arrives home

CARMAN: *Page D2 Col. 1*

Frank Whaley, Helena Bonham Carter as Lee Harvey and Marina Oswald in 'Fatal Deception'

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ARMAN: 'Deception'

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laiming he's shot the right-wing General Edwin Walker, then is enraged to hear on the radio that the murder attempt failed. But this is interesting — we're told that Oswald's favorite old TV show was "I Led Three Lives," about a loyal American who infiltrated the Communist Party. Hmmm.

"Stay out of things you don't understand," Oswald snaps when Marina questions him about his political activities.

Which might have been good advice for the movie. "Fatal Deception" drops broadax hints that Oswald was involved in, or duped by, a wider conspiracy to kill Kennedy. And by 1978, Marina was convinced "the truth has been hidden." But it seems she remains as befuddled as anyone else. And so is the movie.

Want a lavish TV movie about a stranger in a strange land, caught up in a whirlwind she didn't create and cannot fathom? Fine. Carter is your bonus; her liquid eyes and dainty expressiveness are ideal for the role. Marina's English may be faltering, but through Carter she emerges resonantly as a guileless victim brutalized first by her husband, then by history.

More important, what is the "Fatal Deception" here? The lone gunman conclusion about JFK's assassination? For all the film's vague intimations, your guess is as good as David Wolper's.